

--21. A method for preparing a hand-held snack item, said method comprising:

- (a) applying an edible food coating material to an initial formed hand-held food item, thereby forming a preliminary coated hand-held food item, wherein said edible food coating material is applied to said initial formed hand-held food item in such a manner as to substantially completely coat said initial formed hand-held food item;
- (b) applying an edible, heat-sensitive food material to said preliminary coated hand-held food item, thereby forming a secondary coated hand-held food item, wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food material is applied to said preliminary coated hand-held food item in such a manner as to be coated by said edible food coating material, and wherein said edible food coating material is selected from a material which possesses sufficient physical characteristics to act as a protective medium for said edible, heat-sensitive food material when said secondary coated hand-held food item is subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and
- (c) subjecting said secondary coated hand-held food item to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds, thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack item wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food material is substantially intact.

22. A method according to claim 21, wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a grain cake prepared from grains selected from the group consisting of rice, corn and popcorn, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 1% to about 40% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy products, fruit pieces, cinnamon,

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chocolate powder, cocoa, pieces of nuts, sesame seeds, pieces of ham, pieces of bacon, and mixtures thereof.

23. A method according to claim 22 wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a rice cake, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 30% by weight of said first edible heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy pieces, fruit pieces, cinnamon, and mixtures thereof.

24. A method according to claim 23 wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 20% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material are chocolate chips.

25. A method according to claim 22 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 65% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 10% to about 80% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 10% to about 90% by weight of a viscosity providing agent, from about 5% to about 80% by weight flavoring ingredients, from 0% to about 90% by weight bulking substance, from 0% to about 30% by weight fatty acid glycerides, and the balance being water.

26. A method according to claim 23 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 60% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 20% to about 70% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 20% to about 80% by weight viscosity

providing agent selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn syrup and mixtures thereof, from about 5% to about 70% by weight flavoring ingredients selected from the group consisting of salt, cocoa powder, cheese powder, natural and artificial flavoring agents, and mixtures thereof, from 0% to about 80% by weight bulking substance selected from the group consisting of starch, cellulose fiber, bean fiber and mixtures thereof, from about 1% to about 20% by weight fatty acid glycerides selected from the group consisting of vegetable oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, cottonseed oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and mixtures thereof, with the balance being water.

27. A method according to claim 24 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 15% to about 30% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 30% to about 60% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 50% to about 70% by weight sucrose, from about 5% to about 15% by weight flavoring ingredients, from about 1% to about 6% by weight vegetable oil, and the balance being water.

28. A method according to claim 25 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 75°C to about 250°C for a period of time in the range of from about 60 minutes to about 60 seconds.

29. A method according to claim 26 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 125°C to about 175°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 minutes to about 2 minutes.

30. A hand-held snack item prepared according to the method comprising:
- (a) applying an edible food coating material to an initial formed hand-held food item, thereby forming a preliminary coated hand-held food item, wherein said edible food coating material is applied to said initial

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- formed hand-held food item in such a manner as to substantially completely coat said initial formed hand-held food item;
- (b) applying an edible, heat-sensitive food material to said preliminary coated hand-held food item, thereby forming a secondary coated hand-held food item, wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food material is applied to said preliminary coated hand-held food item in such a manner as to be coated by said edible food coating material, and wherein said edible food coating material is selected from a material which possesses sufficient physical characteristics to act as a protective medium for said edible, heat-sensitive food material when said secondary coated hand-held food item is subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and
- (c) subjecting said secondary coated hand-held food item to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds, thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack item wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food material is substantially intact.

31. A method according to claim 30 wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a grain cake prepared from grains selected from the group consisting of rice, corn and popcorn, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 1% to about 40% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy products, fruit pieces, cinnamon, chocolate powder, cocoa, pieces of nuts, sesame seeds, pieces of ham, pieces of bacon, and mixtures thereof.

32. A method according to claim 31 wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a rice cake, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 30% by weight of said first edible heat-sensitive

food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy pieces, fruit pieces, cinnamon, and mixtures thereof.

33. A method according to claim 32 wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 20% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material are chocolate chips.

34. A method according to claim 31 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 65% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 10% to about 80% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 10% to about 90% by weight of a viscosity providing agent, from about 5% to about 80% by weight flavoring ingredients, from 0% to about 90% by weight bulking substance, from 0% to about 30% by weight fatty acid glycerides, and the balance being water.

35. A method according to claim 32 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 60% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 20% to about 70% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 20% to about 80% by weight viscosity providing agent selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn syrup and mixtures thereof, from about 5% to about 70% by weight flavoring ingredients selected from the group consisting of salt, cocoa powder, cheese powder, natural and artificial flavoring agents, and mixtures thereof, from 0% to about 80% by weight bulking substance selected from the group consisting of starch, cellulose fiber, bean fiber and mixtures thereof, from about 1% to about 20% by

weight fatty acid glycerides selected from the group consisting of vegetable oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, cottonseed oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and mixtures thereof, with the balance being water.

36. A method according to claim 33 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 15% to about 30% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 30% to about 60% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 50% to about 70% by weight sucrose, from about 5% to about 15% by weight flavoring ingredients, from about 1% to about 6% by weight vegetable oil, and the balance being water.

37. A method according to claim 34 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 75°C to about 250°C for a period of time in the range of from about 60 minutes to about 60 seconds.

38. A method according to claim 35 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 125°C to about 175°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 minutes to about 2 minutes.--